

NOAA FISHERIES ANNOUNCES:

**1) AN EMERGENCY RULE CHANGING COMMERCIAL SHARK
MANAGEMENT MEASURES INCLUDING QUOTA LEVELS**

AND

**2) THE DATES OF THE COMMERCIAL LARGE COASTAL
SHARK FISHERY CLOSURES**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has finalized an emergency rule, effective for 180 days starting on January 1, 2003, that will implement annual quotas of 783 metric tons (mt) dressed weight (dw) and 931 mt dw for the commercial ridgeback and non-ridgeback large coastal shark fisheries, respectively, and implement an annual quota of 326 mt dw for the commercial small coastal shark fishery. The emergency regulations will also suspend the regulation regarding the commercial ridgeback large coastal shark minimum size. In addition, on January 1, 2003, the regulations on season-specific quota adjustments and counting dead discards and state landings after a Federal closure against the commercial quotas go into effect. To receive copies of the emergency rule or its environmental assessment and regulatory impact review, please contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz at (301) 713-2347. NOAA Fisheries will announce the date and location of any public hearings regarding this emergency rule at a later time. Comments will be accepted through February 14, 2003, at 5 p.m.

The commercial shark fisheries for all species groups will open on January 1, 2003. The semi-annual quotas and closure dates are:

Species Group	Semi-annual quota level	Closure date
Ridgeback LCS (sandbar, silky, tiger)	391.5 mt dw	April 15, 2003, 11:30 pm local time
Non-Ridgeback LCS (blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, and the hammerheads)	465.5 mt dw	May 15, 2003 11:30 pm local time
SCS	163 mt dw	To be determined, as necessary
Blue sharks	136.5 mt dw	
Porbeagle sharks	46 mt dw	
Pelagic sharks other than blue or porbeagle	244 mt dw	

Fishery closures are necessary to ensure that the semiannual quotas for the period January 1 through June 30, 2003, are not exceeded.

During a closure, retention of, fishing for, possessing or selling LCS are prohibited for persons fishing aboard vessels issued a limited access permit under 50 CFR 635.4. The sale, purchase,

trade, or barter of carcasses and/or fins of LCS harvested by a person aboard a vessel that has been issued a permit under 50 CFR 635.4 are prohibited, except for those that were harvested, offloaded, and sold, traded, or bartered prior to the closure and were held in storage by a dealer or processor.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to Atlantic Shark Fisheries interests to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz, 301-713-2347.

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